

Customs DG-Commissioner Meeting on Trade Facilitation
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Opening Speech
Trade Facilitation and the Role of WCO

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Mr. Yukiyasu Aoyama, Director General, Japan Customs,
Mr. Masahiro Kawai, Dean, Asian Development Bank Institute,
Ms. Ursula Schafer-Preuss, Vice President, Asian Development Bank,
Directors General and Commissioner,
Colleagues and friends,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure and privilege to participate in the important gathering at this critical juncture of 21st Century for customs administrations. I should begin by thanking the ADBI and ADB for inviting me to speak and the Japan Customs for co-hosting the high-level meeting. My special thanks go to those officers who worked hard to realize this project and ensured the hospitality and friendship for all of us.

Today we are going to discuss trade facilitation and the use of well-planned IT to achieve this goal. Trade facilitation has gained prominence in trade and development policy at the global and regional level. To illustrate this point, let me share my recent experience in the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland where 2400 business leaders and policy-makers gathered to shape the global agenda and the future direction. In one of the sessions, a panel of dignitaries, including British Prime Minister Tony Blair, South African President Thabo Mbeki, and Bill Gates, discussed the effective way to deliver aid in Africa. Interestingly, efficient border crossing was identified as one of the priorities for promoting much-needed investment in Africa. In another session, transport and logistics leaders organized an informal gathering dedicated to breaking trade barriers, where I was invited to speak together with the WTO Director General Pascal Lamy. First, Mr. Lamy emphasized the inclusion of a new area of trade facilitation as a positive side of DDA (Doha Development Agenda) on top of traditional market access on goods and service. Then, I addressed the meeting that the WCO has already developed standards for modern customs operations, where the WTO

could provide political support to implementing them. The heads of multinational transport companies appreciated the contribution made by the WCO and renewed their commitment to support the efforts in reviving the world trade talk. I also referred to the aspect of trade security, but I got the impression that business leaders view security as part of landscape of trade facilitation.

Incidentally, on the next day of this session, Mr. Lamy announced that a series of meetings in Davos gave a more positive tone to the DDA, which was followed by the formal resumption of trade negotiations last week. While I do not know for sure what course the world trade talk would take, I am certain that the implementation of modern customs principles is a must in integrating national economy into the global economy. Moreover, regional economic integration works as a driver of economic development, in parallel to globalization. The stake is therefore high for customs to actively participate in and contribute to this regional and global integration process. The efficient use of IT is an integral part of this process. In this respect, I hope this meeting will promote policy dialogue and regional cooperation among customs and with the ADB.

I wish you a fruitful discussion.

Thank you for your attention.